

SKIT ACTIVITY: GROUP A

Read the following excerpt from the *Mencius*.

Mencius (370–290 B.C.E.)—one of the most famous Confucian scholars. He helped further Confucian teachings, in particular the notion that human beings are basically good.

exalted—high, superior

Counsellors—advisors

Mencius went to see King Hsüan of Chi'i. "A 'state of established traditions,'" said [Mencius], "is so called not because it has tall trees but because it has ministers whose families have served it for generations. You no longer have trusted ministers. Those you promoted yesterday have all disappeared today without your even being aware of it."

"How could I have known," said the King, "that they lacked ability and so avoided making the appointments in the first instance?"

"When there is no choice, the ruler of a state, in advancing good and wise men, may have to promote those of low position over the heads of those of exalted rank and distant relatives over near ones. Hence such a decision should not be taken lightly. When your close attendants all say of a man that he is good and wise, that is not enough; when the Counsellors all say the same, that is not enough; when everyone says so, then have the case investigated. If the man turns out to be good and wise, then and only then should he be given office."⁸

1. Circle the statement that best matches the meaning of this excerpt. Check with your teacher once you have decided.
 - Every person has his/her place in society.
 - Duties to one's parents are of utmost importance.
 - Promote those who are most able.
 - Human beings are naturally good.
 - There are proper ways to treat the elderly and the young.
 - When others do not treat you well, think of how you could improve yourself.
2. According to Mencius, what is King Hsüan's problem?
3. According to Mencius, what kind of person deserves a job in the government?
4. As a group, prepare a presentation of this excerpt. Your presentation should
 - have participation by all group members;
 - clearly portray the meaning behind this excerpt **in a modern-day context** (such as in a classroom, school, or a current event); and
 - be interesting and creative.